

**REMARKS**

Claims 40-50 are pending. The amendments are supported by the original disclosure at page 6, lines 25-27, and page 13, lines 11-17, of the specification and, thus, no new matter has been added.

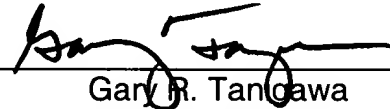
As previously advised, EP 0941478 was the subject of an opposition in the European Patent Office. Enclosed are minutes of the oral proceedings which decided that the claims as amended (see Amended Main Request) are valid and meet the requirements of the European Patent Convention. Copies of the minutes and annexes are attached; they are listed on the Form PTO-1449.

Applicants earnestly solicit an early and favorable examination on the merits. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned if any further information is required.

Respectfully submitted,

**NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.**

By: \_\_\_\_\_



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